



17 June 2011

Mr Tony Sherbon
Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Health Reform Transition Office
Department of Health and Ageing
GPO Box 9848
MDP 39
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Mr Sherbon

Lead Clinicians Groups

The Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) has been active in consultations about Lead Clinicians Groups including: making a written submission to the discussion paper *Lead Clinicians Groups: Enhancing clinical engagement in Australia's health system* issued late January 2011, being interviewed by consultants from Ipsos Eureka Social Research Institute, and through participation in discussion forums.

As the largest professional and industrial organisation in Australia, the ANF has, on behalf of its over 200,000 members: nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing, a genuine interest in the implementation and operations of the Lead Clinician Groups. Our members provide clinical care in a wide range of settings across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote locations in both the public and private health and aged care sectors.

The ANF has now reviewed the latest discussion paper *National Health Reform: Lead Clinicians Groups* and welcomes the opportunity to provide additional advice to the development of this reform. The ANF appreciates the inclusion of some of the points made in our written submission, into the latest discussion paper.

Given comments in our previous submission the ANF is pleased to see that the work of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) will be firmly embedded in the new Lead Clinicians Groups structure. The inclusion of the Chief Executive Officers of these national bodies on the National Lead Clinicians Group should ensure synergy in the workplans of all three groups in relation to clinical standards. The inclusion of the Chief Nurse and Midwifery Officer will provide a vital link with national level nursing and midwifery professional issues.

Some of the initial concerns of the ANF about a National Lead Clinicians Group had related to the nature of the committee membership. The ANF supports the approach taken to how the group will be constituted as outlined on page 6 of the discussion paper. We will use our substantial networks across State and Territory Branches to encourage applications for membership of the National Lead Clinicians Group from eligible nurses and midwives.

While the discussion paper mirrors the ANF's definition of the term "clinician" as being a "medical practitioner, nurse, allied health practitioner or other health practitioner", we note medico-centric overtones throughout the document. The aim of the Lead Clinicians Groups should be to strengthen clinical leadership in the health system more broadly than one particular health professional group (for example, as indicated on page 3 under "Context and Objectives").

Having requested in our previous submission that where State and Territory based mechanisms for clinician engagement are working well these be retained, the ANF is pleased to see that these structures will be used as starting points for the formation of Local Lead Clinicians Groups (LLCGs). Further, that the ANF's concerns around the membership of these groups in some States or Territories is being addressed by a requirement for inclusion of a range of health professionals on the LLCGs.

In relation to the term "practicing clinician" as a requirement for eligibility for membership of the Lead Clinicians Groups, the ANF notes the following considerations. Nursing and midwifery have different operational structures to our medical colleagues whereby senior members of our professions rarely carry a direct clinical load, and thus do not meet the requirement of 'practicing clinician'. Nurses and midwives who are "practicing clinicians" experience great difficulty in obtaining time out from their clinical practice to attend external meetings. Given that the nursing and midwifery professions form the largest component of the health sector the ANF believes it would be appropriate to extend the requirement to incorporate practicing clinicians and non-direct care clinical leaders.

The ANF looks forward to learning the outcomes of the consultation and to assisting further in the development of processes seeking to achieve greater engagement of clinicians in service planning for the delivery of safe, quality health and aged care.

Should you require any additional information or wish to discuss this matter further please contact Elizabeth Foley, Federal Professional Officer, on (03) 9602 8500 or elizabethf@anf.org.au.

Yours sincerely,



Lee Thomas
Federal Secretary

The industrial and professional organisation for nurses and midwives in Australia

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